(b) Registration for new telephone connection is a continuous process. 1,21,403 connections have been provided during 2004-2005. Waiting list as on 01.04.2004 was 1,21,465. Total waiting list as on 01.04.2005 is 96,871.

(c) and (d) There is a plan to provide 1,22,000 connections of land lines, 1,69,000 connections on WLL and 12,00,000 on CMTS during 2005-2006.

Denial of U.S. visa to Gujarat Chief Minister

4530. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA has rejected India's request for review of the decision on denying a visa to Gujarat Chief Minister;

(b) if so, the details of the reasons stated by the Government of USA in this regards;

(c) Government's reaction in regard thereto;

(d) whether Government would deny visa to U.S. citizens wishing to visit India on similar grounds; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) The Government learnt on 18 March, 2005 of the US decision to deny a visa to Shri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat. The visa had been requested by the Ministry of External Affairs through a Note Verbale to the US Embassy on 28 February, 2005. The Government conveyed its views to the US Government that this action displays a lack of courtesy towards a constitutionally elected Chief Minister. A protest was lodged with the Embassy and reconsideration of its decision was urged. The US Embassy announced on March 21,2005 that the US had not revised its decision of March 18. The Government conveyed its regrets that in spite of its demarche, the US had not reconsidered its decision.

(d) and (e) In view of the Government's principled stand indicated above, it would not behave the Government to act in dissonance with it's own stated position.

Discussion about PoWs with Pak President

4531. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI:
SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have also discussed about Indian Prisoners of War imprisoned in Pakistan during talks held recently with Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when, the Indian Prisoners of War are likely to be get released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) During the visit of Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf to India from 16 to 18 April, 2005, both Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf discussed the issue of prisoners and endorsed the decisions taken in the meeting of Foreign Secretaries of the two countries on 27-28 December, 2004, and the Foreign Ministers on 15-17 February, 2005, on the measures to be taken to alleviate the situation of prisoners in each other's countries.

According to available information, 54 Prisoners of War (PoWs) are believed to be in custody in Pakistan. However, Pakistan Government has consistently denied the existence of any Indian PoWs in Pakistan. Government, through diplomatic channels, have been consistently taking up the issue of early release of Indian PoWs believed to be in Pakisan's custody since 1971-72. The matter was also taken up during the meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Prime Minister of Pakistan on November 24, 2004.